

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 9, NO. 198.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 1909.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

THE TILLMAN CASE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IF all that was really involved in the conflict between the President and Senator Tillman was the individual honesty of the latter, or the vicious pettiness of the former, the case could be dismissed with the verdict: "The Senator comes off with flying colors."

In a way, that, indeed, is all that was involved. Nevertheless, such quarrels rarely arise simply from a clash of temperaments. Some principle usually lies at bottom. At times such as these the exchange of personalities should not be allowed to becloud the principles that the heaving times are formulating.

Correctly did Senator Tillman ask, Have I not the right to buy land? The answer is: "Yes, you have the right to buy land, because the 'right,' at present, implies the necessity to live." The question and answer indict the present social system as an unavoidable breeder of corruption.

The theory that legislators—Government officials, in general,—must draw no salary for their work, a theory still extensively prevalent in Great Britain, comes from an aspiration which material conditions are not abreast of. The theory presupposes a social condition of things in which the official's living is assured, above all, a social state of things in which his interests subserve the Commonwealth. Such a condition of things does not exist under class rule, surely not under capitalism. No man's existence is assured under class rule; as a consequence, the interests of an official not only do not subserve the interests of the commonwealth, they do not even subserve the interests of his fellow officials. The principle of non-payment of officials fails of foundation even in country like England, where a whole branch of the Legislature consists only of large property holders. The principle failing of foundation in such a country, it follows that in an out-and-out capitalist country like America the official has "a right to buy land,"

that is, is unavoidably put into a position where the struggle for existence compels him to look out for that majority which Lord Palmerston pronounced to be No. 1.

Roosevelt—himself an official of class rule, and, consequently, with interests to subserve obedient to the law of the Struggle for Existence—sought, with characteristic moral turpitude, to fasten Shame upon a fellow official for practices which he himself is forced to indulge in. What however, Roosevelt did, in fact, was, despite himself, to force to the fore the unavoidable immorality of capitalist political officialdom.

Only the Socialist or Industrial Republic can furnish the material conditions for rank-and-file purity, hence for the purity of its officials. The material possibility for purity being now in existence, Society is heaving with the demand that the social institutions be adapted to the improved material conditions. The Roosevelt-Tillman conflict is but one of the many manifestations of the social heavings, which imperatively demand the overthrow of capitalism and of its reflex, the capitalist State.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

Uploaded May 2010

slpns@slp.org